8: Ewers E,G-4,5 (1941-1951) 1971 NF6 Blackfoot NF6

plained to their daughters the honor bestowed upon the medicine woman because she had always been true to her husband.

Girls dressed in garments which were miniatures of those worn by their mothers. But small boys often went nude in the summer. Or, at most, they wore only a breechclout in warm weather.

Blackfoot children were accustomed to horses from infancy. As babies they rode on their mothers' backs atop a horse when camp was moved. When they were able to sit up, they rode on the travois or on horseback behind their mothers. At an early age, usually by their fifth year, they were taught to ride alone. The child was lifted into a high-horned woman's saddle on a gentle horse, and rawhide ropes were passed back and forth between pommel and cantle on each side and tied to prevent the child's falling. A parent led the horse around the camp at a slow walk. If the child was afraid, he could hold on to the saddle horn. As he gained in experience and confidence, he was led at a faster pace and was taught to use the reins to control his mount. When camp was moved, the child was tied in the saddle and the horse was led by an adult. Soon he was riding alone. By the time most children were six or seven years old, they were good riders. Some rode little saddles made for them by fond mothers or grandmothers. They also learned to ride bareback and to ride double, and they frequently competed in impromptu horse races.

Fathers looked after the education of the boys, but they were allowed much more freedom than were girls. Boys were taught to make miniature bows and arrows. They were encouraged to take part in rough, active body- and character-building games and sports. At the sun dance encampment fathers pointed out to their sons the great warriors of their tribe and cited the honors that came to men who were brave and successful at the arts of war. The hero-worshiping youth was told again and again the stirring narratives of the outstanding fighting men of his tribe, both past and present. He was reminded of the old Blackfoot proverb, "It is better to die in battle than of old age or sickness."

Boys of about ten years of age were entrusted with the daily

28: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1967 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
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buffalo went out of sight." Before this time, these Indians of the Plains had been buffalo hunters and horse raiders. Afterwards, and by a somewhat devious process, they became cattle breeders and wheat farmers.

Some one hundred and fifty years earlier, the introduction of the horse and the gun had also radically affected their mode of life. Mobility increased, the hunting range was extended, competition was intensified, both outside and inside the tribal group. The horse became the most sought-for and fought-for possession, and despite disease, accidents of climate and enemy raids, accumulation was possible and led, in the course of time, to marked wealth differences. Some men might have one hundred horses (Maximilian, Prince of Wied-Neuwied, gives a much larger figure) and some might have only a few or none. The dangers of decrease were mitigated by elaborate manipulation. The horse became not only the measure of wealth but the medium of exchange. Everything—trade goods, bride price, ceremonial privilege, and often personal support—were paid for in horses. Loss in capital was temporary. Pipes, bundles, society insignia, could all be resold, often at a profit, and a return for "gifts" or conspicuous distributions at give-aways was normal expectancy. In addition, a poor man who had to borrow a horse from a rich patron—not infrequently the band chief—would have to pay over one-half his kill to his benefactor.

Thus the fact that great numbers of horses could be accumulated and held for a considerable period led to certain advantage, and this advantage was in no way destroyed by manipulation. Shrewdly organized, it could build prestige and bring support.

It was particularly in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, when the fur trade was expanding and more goods came into the hands of the Blood, that the demonstrations of wealth became insistent. It was in this period that the rich man increased the number of his wives (he might have six or seven, while the poor man could not pay for one and had to be content with surreptitious visits to a younger and "uncertain" wife of a more fortunate tribesman); and having many wives, the rich man's tipi could be large and impressive (it was women's work to clean and tan the hides, sew them together and erect the dwelling); and it was also at this time that the "favorite," the *minipoka*, the "child of plenty" received formal recognition as a means of exploiting wealth. The influence of this institution on the father-child relationship has been significant. Today, in a different setting, its role is particularly so.

But whatever the potential increase in the food supply, or the possibility and advantage of accumulation after the introduction of the horse, for the Blood in the buffalo period, life was still precarious. Ex-

28: Goldfrank E-4,5 (1939) 1967 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
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cepting for the sons of the rich—and they were a decided minority— skill in hunting and warfare and courage in the face of danger were the musts for survival. In a word, self-reliance was the aim and basis of training.

And self-reliance was as necessary inside the home as outside it. Not that the Blood lacked affection for their offsprings, or a desire to support them. Many observers have commented most positively on both these traits. But the dependence on the hunt and war for food and gain, the frequent movings from place to place, made the rearing of children a difficult matter. Many stories are told of newborn infants "thrown away," left to die in the bushes, either because they could not be cared for on the march, or because raiders might hear their cries and thus be led to the camping ground, or because a mother had died in childbirth (the lot of the orphan, and even the half-orphan, was, and still is, far from enviable).

It was also considered desirable to limit the number of children. Two years was the standard interval, but the longer the time between siblings, the more parents demonstrated their love for the child previously born. Moreover, abortion carried no stigma. Magic help for this purpose could be easily secured from an authorized female practitioner, and as a special favor, a stop could be put to childbearing altogether. Revealingly, barrenness is never given as a cause for divorce in this competitive society where women are highly prized as property and sex objects, and where marriage is notoriously unstable.

The hunt and war often and for extended periods took the Blood father away from home. And these absences, however necessary, were a continual threat to a child's security. For whether justified or not, and frequently he was justified, a husband was quick to suspect that "the worst" had happened while he was gone.[21] A child often heard his mother accused of adultery, often saw her beaten, and not infrequently deserted. Whatever the ultimate solution of familial disagreement, the child invariably was the sufferer. Even if his parents remained together, he often sought refuge with a nearby relative to avoid further scenes of violence. If they separated and he went with his mother, as he usually did if he was still "young," his sense of belonging might be rudely disturbed again. For often when his mother remarried, she left him with

[21] Among the Blood jealousy was and is obsessional. Many a husband approaching his end threatened to kill his wife, for only if she accompanied him on his final journey would he be sure that he alone would possess her in the next world. The only Blood confined to an insane asylum, whose case was not complicated by physical causes, attempted to murder his wife because he believed she was having intercourse with a ghost.

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held in his father's arms long after such attention was necessary. And when he joined other children in the play camp, he was not the "husband" of some willing little girl, as was a less protected youngster. His sister remained his watchful "mother." In the main, his close companions were *minipoka* like himself, an arrangement that not only fostered a blatant élitism, but also protected the "privileged" from being ganged up on by less favored children.

Nor was the "child of plenty" permitted to visit around and stay out overnight as other boys did. Nor could he attend the socially convivial "tea dances" along with other young blades. But when his father went on a trip, the *minipoka* was, whenever possible, the companion of his choice. It goes without saying that the favorite wore fine clothes, rode good horses with beautiful trappings, married with ostentatious display. Moreover, as he grew to manhood, he was spared the onerous participation in the hunt and the dangers of the warpath. He trusted to his father's wealth to bring him positions of respect. And this trust was not misplaced. Among the Blackfoot, "great deeds in social and ceremonial life would alone elevate one to the status of headman."[22]

True, the favorite was expected to be "generous" to all and sundry. More often, however, his training made him lazy and parasitical, readier to exploit the labor of others than to add to their support.

Originally a means for validating a father's wealth, the institution of the favorite child had secondary consequences—among them, the reinforcement of sibling rivalry, the encouragement of dependency in a society where self-reliance was a major objective, and the forging of strong affectional bonds between a father and his child, most usually between a father and his son. And it is this last that has particular importance for the way in which the father image is revealed in every-day life.

Being a favorite meant submission to certain restrictions—less freedom of movement, less participation in some of the more adventurous or romantic aspects of Blood society; and, at times, this was resented. But we have no record of any Blood who rejected the substantial attentions and advantages offered by favoritism. For the *minipoka*, the father became the "giver" *par excellence*, the only reliable "giver," since their statuses were so inextricably linked.[23]

[22] Clark Wissler, "The Social Life of the Blackfoot Indians," p. 23.

[23] In the reserve period, the government was actually more "reliable." But favoritism continued and with it patterns of an earlier time that still had relevance. In fact, those Blood who had no horses, and so could not make the traditional investments in ceremonial paraphernalia and society memberships, etc., but who were otherwise successful, had favorites "the American Way"—that is, they dressed their children well and showered them with expensive gifts.

178 among the Blood. Like their white counterparts the young
626 Blood are enjoined to succeed. Like their white counter-
181 parts they are taught to enjoy competition and striving.
But unlike the whites the sanctions employed are not guilt
and rejection, but ridicule, shaming, teasing, and loss of
recognition.

These sanctions employed by the Blood, whether activated by design or neglect, are quite consistent through
● [866] the years of maturation of the young Blood. These sanctions
prepare the individual psychologically for the independent
quest for immediate practical and non-practical goals. The
Blood independently assess the possibilities for success
in various occupations with regard to their previous train-
178 ing and experience. They do not see their success strivings
181 as related to their total life as do the American college
students. By relating their strivings to what they have
experienced in their life on the Reserve they in large mea-
sure commit themselves to what is possible within the Reserve
community.

181 Success to the young Blood is individual and inde-
pendent. It is not really relevant to their total life, to
their wives, families, and children. Their success is rele-
vant to their own personal success needs. If success is not
forthcoming in one endeavor, one may always try another.